

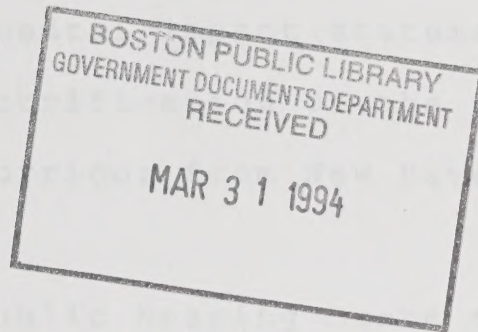


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DMJM Harris

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS



HEARING, held at ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL, 144

McBride Street, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, on

November 16, 1993.

DEANNA ANDERSON

CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER

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MR. LEVY: Good afternoon.

I'm Ira Levy from the firm of DMJM/Harris who's a consultant for the environmental impact statement for the electrification of the Northeast Corridor from New Haven to Boston.

This public hearing meets the requirements of the National Environmental Protection Act as part of the environmental impact statement process.

What we would like to do today is spend a few minutes giving you an overview of the project talking about where we were in the process, where we are and where we're going. And the purpose of this meeting and to give the majority of the time is for the individuals to comment on the draft environmental impact statement that has already been issued to the public.

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1 Sitting with me is individuals
2 from the Federal Railroad
3 Administration and the Volpe
4 National Transportation Systems
5 Center. Directly next to me is
6 Bill Fashouer from the FRA. Next
7 to him is Peter Montague from the
8 FRA and on the end is Glenn Goulet
9 from the Volpe National
10 Transportation Systems Center.

11 The Northeast Corridor as you
12 know goes from Washington to
13 Boston. It has the highest rail
14 patronage in the country. It is
15 electrified from Washington, DC to
16 New Haven. And this proposal
17 intends to electrify it from New
18 Haven to Boston.

19 Right now there is diesel from
20 New Haven to Boston and then there
21 is a switch to electrical engines
22 at New Haven for the rest of the
23 trip to Washington. This project

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1 is part of the Northeast Corridor
2 Improvement Project better known as
3 NECIP.

4 The types of projects that
5 NECIP is undertaking has to do with
6 three categories; the
7 infrastructure which includes this
8 electrification as well as rail
9 line upgrades and other things,
10 congestion relief which Shell will
11 include a flyover, the Stamford
12 Station improvements and New Haven
13 track configuration improvements.
14 Also there will be equipment
15 acquisition as part of this
16 program.

17 The Northeast Corridor
18 Electrification Project as I said
19 is from New Haven to Boston. That
20 is what entails the project which
21 is the relationship between the
22 Amtrak, the FRA and us and the EIS
23 that is now on the table.

The participants are the Federal Railroad Administration which is mandated by Congress to implement this program with Amtrak and is responsible for the environmental impact statement.

The Volpe National Transportation Systems Center is a division of the U.S. Department of Transportation and is directed by the FRA to undertake this enterprise.

DMJM/Harris which I represent is on the contract for Volpe National Transportation Systems Center and we are the contractors who are performing the EIS. Amtrak, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation is the proponent. They are the ones who intend to do the project and to run the trains.

Over the last three years we are performing various aspects of environmental studies as required

1 by regulatory process. The project
2 components that we've looked at
3 include substations and electric
4 feed lines, switching stations,
5 autotransformers, bridge
6 modifications, that is raising
7 bridges if the cars can't fit in
8 with the catenary situation,
9 railroad stations, catenary system
10 itself, program operation, fencing
11 and other items.

12 The categories that we looked
13 at in the general impact sense were
14 land use and socioeconomic;
15 historical and archaeological;
16 transportation, circulation, and
17 access; natural resources:
18 Wetlands, wildlife, water quality;
19 noise, air quality.

20 And project specific
21 categories are vibration, energy,
22 public safety, electromagnetic
23 frequencies, EMF and visual and

aesthetic.

The regulatory process that is involved is a federal regulatory process, state and local. In federal, one of the main processes is the NEPA process. In the state, it's the MEPA process. Local or local permits. These all engage environmental studies, agency reviews and permits as applicable.

The NEPA process which is we are involved here today involves various components. About a year or two years ago we had a scoping session which we asked comments from the public in the appropriate agencies to tell us what to study and how to study. We did a baseline, existing conditions. We analyzed alternatives. We evaluated impacts and that led to the publication of a draft environmental impact statement.

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1 That statement is open for public
2 and agency scrutiny in which this
3 hearing is part of that process.

4 Upon conclusion there will be
5 a final impact statement which
6 tells the final conclusions of all
7 that is concerned regarding this
8 project.

9 The final environmental impact
10 statement will entail response to
11 the comments that we receive on the
12 DEIS, both at these public hearings
13 and in writing. It will also
14 incorporate relevant changes in the
15 proposed action. Any changes
16 caused necessary by mitigation or
17 changes caused by the applicant and
18 the proponent deciding to make
19 certain changes. It also
20 incorporates agency reviews in
21 consultation and direction and
22 leads to a record of decision.

23 These hearings are required by

1 NEPA and they are strongly
2 encouraged by FRA procedures.
3 These hearings provide an
4 opportunity for public input on the
5 environmental study as well as
6 agency input and it establishes the
7 framework for the FEIS.

8 So therefore, this is
9 basically saying what we're looking
10 for. We are encouraging you and
11 hope that you give us comments
12 based upon what was in the written
13 DEIS document that will enable us
14 to do further analysis and
15 direction as far as the conclusion
16 to the FEIS.

17 The comment process that we're
18 now in again is to address the
19 adequacy of the analysis and the
20 merits of alternatives discussed.
21 There's a forty-five day period
22 that is allowed from the
23 publication of the DEIS for

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1 comments. Right now the federal
2 process, the NEPA process, comments
3 will be closed on the 3rd of
4 December and the NEPA process will
5 close December 9.

6 What we would like to do for
7 the rest of the period is take your
8 comments. This is not an
9 informational meeting. Generally
10 speaking, there is no addressing of
11 your comments at this time.
12 They're taken for the public record
13 and they need to be addressed one
14 by one in the FEIS. To that fact,
15 we all should be advised that we
16 have a public stenographer who is
17 keeping a transcript of these
18 proceedings.

19 Furthermore, you're all
20 encouraged to submit written
21 testimony as you so choose and to
22 have it into us by the dates which
23 are I believe again they're the 3rd

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1 and the 9th. I'll just
2 double-check. That's important
3 because once we close the period
4 for accepting comments, if you
5 submit it afterwards, it generally
6 is not incorporated. And again,
7 for the federal process, it is
8 December 3. For the state process
9 in the Commonwealth of
10 Massachusetts, it's December 9.

11 What we would like to afford
12 is each individual five minutes of
13 time to address and make their
14 comments. If there is more time
15 necessary, please submit it in
16 writing. Because again, we're not
17 going to address any of the
18 technical concerns that you may
19 have at this time. It helps us if
20 you have additional stuff to put it
21 in writing and we'll gladly take it
22 up to the dates indicated.

23 I will, however, address any

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1 procedural questions that one may
2 have. We can address that at this
3 time and if we can't answer you, we
4 will get back to you.

5 We have three individuals who
6 requested to speak. I'll read out
7 their names in order and if there
8 is anyone after that, please just
9 identify yourself and feel free to
10 come forward. First one is Leo
11 Purcell.

12 And this little gizmo that
13 they gave me is a five minute
14 indicator. It has a one minute
15 warning light so you'll have some
16 idea.

17 MR. PURCELL: I'll be
18 relatively brief, sir.

19 MR. LEVY: Okay.

20 MR. PURCELL: My name is Leo
21 Purcell. I'm president of the
22 Massachusetts Building Trades
23 Counsel Umbrella Organization of

1 Construction Unions representing
2 approximately sixty thousand
3 construction workers across the
4 Commonwealth.

5 In looking at this
6 environmental impact statement, I
7 would just like to compliment those
8 who put it together and I think it
9 really seems as if it's going to be
10 a conclusion of a project.

11 And given the alternatives of
12 doing nothing in electrifying
13 between New Haven and Boston and
14 making the system work, making real
15 faster and alternatives to the mode
16 of transportation we have now. In
17 behalf of the counsel I would
18 support it.

19 More importantly where we come
20 from and it's certainly not jobs at
21 any cost that the potential of six
22 or seven hundred construction jobs
23 that we believe that it's

critically important for the Commonwealth that we follow through with this project and particularly for those workers and many of those who find themselves through no fault of their own unemployed at this time.

So we speak in support of the study that has been done at this time and we hope that this project will move postdate September of 1994.

MR. LEVY: Thank you.

MR. PURCELL: Thank you.

MR. LEVY: Steve Olanoff.

MR. OLANOFF: Steve Olanoff, Town of Westwood Planning Board. I had hoped to get some answers to some questions. Am I correct that that's not possible?

MR. LEVY: You can ask. I'll tell you if we can -- again, this is a public hearing process. It's

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1 not an informational meeting.

2 MR. OLANOFF: Steven Olanoff,
3 Town of Westwood Planning Board.
4 The draft environmental impact
5 statement review was very vague and
6 actually contradictory in some of
7 the things concerning University
8 Avenue Railroad Station and the
9 intersections of University Avenue
10 and Blue Hill Drive.

11 We are concerned about what is
12 going to be done exactly as far as
13 the parking at the railroad station
14 and the traffic impact on the
15 intersections. These were items
16 that were supposed to be addressed
17 according to the NEPA certification
18 and it really wasn't clear what if
19 anything would be done to mitigate
20 these measures.

21 The statement said that there
22 would be a fifty percent increase
23 just from the increased Amtrak

1 traffic alone at the parking lot of
2 Route 128. We'd like to know what
3 exactly are the plans for the
4 garage. As far as we know the T
5 has just indefinitely postponed.
6 We haven't heard anything from them
7 as to plans to building a parking
8 garage there.

9 We would like to have a
10 reasonably sized parking garage at
11 the University Avenue Station to
12 take care of its problem.
13 Otherwise, the parking lot runs a
14 capacity now.

15 The environmental impact
16 statement said that there is a
17 problem here but it didn't say how
18 it was going to be resolved other
19 than there may be some discussion
20 with the T or they said that in one
21 place. Another page on the report
22 it just said no additional parking
23 is planned which is a

1 contradiction.

2 For the intersections of Blue
3 Hill Drive and Route 128 ramps and
4 the intersection of University
5 Avenue and Blue Hill Drive, again,
6 there is mention of signalization
7 that is being planned but we know
8 of no actual timetable or exactly
9 what the plans are for this, when
10 it will be done.

11 So we'd like really three
12 things which is what are designs
13 for both the parking garage and the
14 traffic improvements at both
15 intersections. We'd like to know
16 what sort of timetable, will it
17 actually be there in time for the
18 increase in traffic and automobile
19 usage and how this is going to be
20 financed.

21 Hopefully -- is it correct
22 that this is the draft
23 environmental statement so there

1 will be a more detailed one coming
2 out later?

3 MR. LEVY: That's correct.
4 And clearly your comments are
5 warranted comments and they will be
6 looked at in the light of your
7 statement.

8 As you know the final EIS is
9 the one that has the mitigation
10 measures which then are adopted in
11 the record of decision which is a
12 direction. It's actually an order
13 of conditions that comes out of DOT
14 to Amtrak.

15 Generally, the EIS does not
16 necessarily give explicit details
17 as to how things are going to
18 achieve but it makes it such an
19 order of condition such that you
20 cannot proceed unless you do this.
21 And the proof of burden would be on
22 Amtrak.

23 So if these things are adopted

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1 as a mitigation measure, then they
2 would be an item that would be
3 perceived as something that has to
4 be done. And time can be also an
5 issue in the mitigation.

6 MR. OLANOFF: And I have
7 another subject which is completely
8 different if I can address that
9 which is protection of the
10 wetlands.

11 The railroad line runs through
12 Fall Meadow Reservation which is a
13 critical wetlands area and is
14 listed as an area of critical
15 environmental concern.

16 And I noticed the mitigation
17 measure said that work would be
18 done at night there to and all
19 access would be by the railroad
20 line which sounds good but as
21 always we're concerned about the
22 actual implementation of these
23 precautions.

1 We also get a lot of
2 insurances and a lot of words
3 written down saying that the
4 wetlands will be protected. And
5 when it actually comes to carrying
6 this out, it's quite a different
7 story.

8 I'm not sure that the
9 construction workers out there have
10 read the environmental impact
11 report. I don't think any of you
12 people are going to be out there in
13 the middle of the night watching
14 the work going on that's occurring
15 in the wetlands.

16 In that area the Neponset
17 River comes very, very close to the
18 tracks in two places. The whole
19 area is critical wetlands.

20 As an example, work was
21 recently halted by the Dedham
22 Conservation Commission at Route
23 128 for simple sidewalk and

1 platform replacement was going on
2 where apparently it was the T or
3 the T and Amtrak together on this
4 project had gone forward and were
5 working right next to a wetlands.
6 Wetlands which the T had been very
7 careful to point out in the past
8 for the parking garage plans that
9 these wetlands were there and they
10 would be respected.

11 They were working right next
12 to those wetlands without normal
13 wetlands precautions. And in
14 addition, didn't even consult the
15 Dedham Conservation Commission in
16 getting the order of conditions to
17 do that work.

18 They further at the other end
19 of the station removed a section of
20 guard rail and actually trespassed
21 on NBT park property and filled in
22 wetlands there. They filled in
23 wetlands which are part of public

1 park, protected area, an area of
2 critical environment to concern as
3 though they knew nothing about
4 these things and had no idea that
5 anything like this even existed.

6 This is just an example and
7 it's very recent because this work
8 was only stopped about two weeks
9 ago and the work was within the
10 last month.

11 This is an example of what
12 happens when you get all sorts of
13 insurances that you're going to be
14 careful of the wetlands and follow
15 the strictest procedures and
16 somehow it just doesn't happen.

17 I'd really like to know in
18 detail who is going to be watching
19 this construction work at night so
20 that the wetlands protections are
21 carried out.

22 MR. LEVY: Okay. Thank you
23 very, very much. Excuse me for one

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1 minute. Next is Nina Wilds.

2 MS. WILDS: My name is Nina
3 Wilds. I am a member of the
4 Volunteer Board of Trustees at
5 Cliffmont Condominium. We're a
6 ninety unit condominium development
7 that many of our units are located
8 extremely close to the tracks. I
9 can see them from my front door and
10 we have already been designated
11 number four property affected
12 immediately by the potential noise
13 increase and any dangers of the
14 electrification process.

15 So I have I think three
16 concerns. One is I know just -- I
17 don't know how I know it, somehow I
18 know because I've read that
19 electrification is bad. It's
20 dangerous.

21 I think studies in Europe have
22 shown that it is connected to that
23 being close to high voltage

1 electric wires can contribute to
2 childhood leukemia and other
3 diseases. I'm sure it's not real
4 healthy for grown-ups either.

5 I'm concerned about what the
6 intentions are regarding shielding
7 neighbors from that electrical
8 power.

9 The second concern is noise.
10 We have noise now. I understand
11 that electric trains may be quieter
12 than diesel trains and that would
13 be nice but I know they're going
14 faster. So I would like to know
15 exactly what the noise differential
16 will be. I know it's going to be
17 more.

18 I understand that barriers
19 would be put in place to help solve
20 both of these problems. I've heard
21 twenty-foot walls which sounds like
22 it would offer quite a bit of
23 protection. It also sounds as if

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1 it will be frightfully ugly and I'm
2 concerned about how those look.

3 We are in Boston, in
4 Roslindale section of Boston. I
5 have a feeling if we were in
6 Greenwich, Connecticut, where I
7 know these lines also run through,
8 we might perhaps get different kind
9 of treatment. I want to make sure
10 we get the kind of treatment that
11 is fair and that is suitable to our
12 neighborhood.

13 We have both condominiums and
14 single-family homes in our
15 neighborhood and I just want to
16 make sure that we get something
17 that we can live with that will
18 enhance your project, make it safe.
19 I know it's a good project but also
20 will not destroy the value of our
21 neighborhood.

22 If money needs to be allocated
23 to make sure that we don't get the

1 cheapest thing that you can just
2 throw up there, that would be
3 great. We would like to have some
4 thought put into both the quality
5 and the looks of the barrier that
6 would get erected.

7 MR. LEVY: Thank you. At this
8 time is there anyone else that
9 would like to make a comment?
10 Would you please identify yourself?

11 MS. SNYDER: My name is Mary
12 Snyder. I'm representing Neponset
13 Watershed Association. My concerns
14 are somewhat the same as Steve's of
15 the Fall Meadows, Ponkapaug Bog,
16 Neponset River, ACEC comes right
17 along the tracks through Norwood
18 and Canton and it doesn't seem to
19 be mentioned or documented at all.
20 So that's an area of critical
21 environmental concern that should
22 be taken care of.

23 MR. LEVY: Okay. Thank you.

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1 Anybody else? Okay. If there's no
2 other comments we're going to
3 state --

4 MS. GOLDEN: Actually, I'd
5 like to say something.

6 MR. LEVY: Sure. Just
7 identify yourself.

8 MS. GOLDEN: Ceri Golden and I
9 live actually about a block away
10 from here, right along side the
11 quarter park. I just learned about
12 this whole process so I'm a little
13 bit concerned about the lack of
14 dissemination of information.

15 I mean, literally, I just got
16 a notice of this meeting last night
17 from some active people in my
18 neighborhood and without their
19 help, I wouldn't be here.

20 I had read something about it
21 in a Jamaica Plain newspaper and
22 had no information of how I could
23 impact on this process.

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1 And I come today and I find
2 out that I'm not going to really
3 receive any information. So I
4 assume that most of what I need to
5 know is in the impact statement?

6 MR. LEVY: Yes. The impact
7 statement is three volumes. It is
8 in libraries. I don't know if
9 there are any more copies available
10 but you can gladly leave your name
11 and we can tell you where the
12 closest copy is if we can't get you
13 one.

14 The process has been a public
15 process for the last two years.
16 There have been articles in the
17 local papers as well as The Globe.
18 We have had public hearings, public
19 information meetings.

20 So I mean, we have afforded
21 the opportunity to all concerned
22 parties to be active. We gladly
23 take any comments, any calls at any

1 is all about.

2 Right now your best point is
3 to put your comments in writing,
4 think about what you want to say
5 and you have between for the
6 federal process up to December 3
7 and the state process December 9.

8 MS. GOLDEN: Do we send that
9 same sheet to the same address?

10 MR. LEVY: Yes. There are two
11 processes going on concurrently
12 here. The Commonwealth of
13 Massachusetts also has a stringent
14 process that dovetails with the
15 federal process.

16 Furthermore, you're always
17 welcome to contact the state
18 directly, contact your
19 representatives directly. You can
20 always contact Amtrak and the MBTA
21 directly as well.

22 MS. GOLDEN: Who would be the
23 contact person at the state level

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1 other than the executives?

2 MR. LEVY: That would be the
3 executive officer of Environmental
4 Affairs. It's Mr. William T. Gage.

5 The individuals in the back
6 can get you names and addresses of
7 anybody that you would really like.
8 Clearly, we could do that.

9 It's indicated right in the
10 draft report but we have the names
11 of who you could contact.

12 MS. GOLDEN: Is there a strong
13 commitment to mitigating any
14 negative noise impact or is there a
15 sense that there will be increased
16 noise impact and it will be too bad
17 to the people who are affected by
18 it?

19 MR. LEVY: Basically, there's
20 two things going on. One, there is
21 a feeling from the local residences
22 that the present noise level is not
23 acceptable.

1 That is really not an issue of
2 this study because this study is
3 mandated to look at the
4 differential of what happens from
5 what's present to what's proposed.

6 So there is two issues and
7 clearly though I think if you have
8 concerns, you should voice your
9 concerns if that's what it is.

10 It's unfortunate we're just
11 not at a position to say where it's
12 going. But clearly from your point
13 in the process, you're welcome to
14 get involved.

15 We had unfortunately an
16 informational meeting, a dialogue
17 meeting, on noise a few months ago
18 and I wish you were there.

19 MS. GOLDEN: I do too.

20 MR. LEVY: But those are the
21 two basic issues that have
22 developed. One is the present
23 noise level and one is the

1 anticipated noise level.

2 MS. GOLDEN: If there's time
3 could you say what came out of that
4 meeting?

5 MR. LEVY: I'm sorry. I'm not
6 going to be able to, not at this
7 forum. But I think gladly if you
8 would contact our staff, they can
9 clearly meet with you and tell you
10 what happened. We have no
11 objection.

12 This forum is a fairly
13 stringent forum as mandated by
14 regulatory process. So we really
15 don't want to get into that aspect
16 of it. It's not an informational
17 meeting.

18 MS. GOLDEN: One last
19 question. Is there any possibility
20 in mitigating the noise impact that
21 they could actually make the
22 situation better than it is right
23 now?

1 MR. LEVY: That is possible.
2 What is happening is there are
3 discussions with Amtrak who was the
4 operator not only for the
5 interstate line but also for the
6 MBTA.

7 And they are looking at
8 various aspects with the MBTA as
9 far as reducing noise level,
10 whether or not this project goes
11 forward that is.

12 MS. GOLDEN: I see. Okay.
13 Thank you.

14 MR. LEVY: And as I said, if
15 you need more information on that,
16 my suggestion is contact the MBTA,
17 contact the local representatives.

18 MS. WILDS: Who is the MBTA?

19 MR. LEVY: These days I'm
20 never too sure. Right now I would
21 say Charlie Stuart. Charlie Stuart
22 works for the commuter rail of the
23 MBTA. Thank you. And if you need

1 any names or phone numbers.

2 Anybody else?

3 MR. OLANOFF: Why was the
4 meeting held here? Why wasn't the
5 meeting held where I could take the
6 train to get to it?

7
8 (From the floor)

9
10 MR. LEVY: Anybody else?

11 MS. WILDS: Just an
12 information question. What's a
13 flyover?

14 MR. LEVY: A flyover is right
15 now say there are five tracks, four
16 tracks, six tracks going straight
17 and when they want to cut off they
18 have to switch tracks.

19 Flyover means that they will
20 be able to on an elevated portion
21 come down and over.

22 MS. WILDS: Oh.

23 MR. LEVY: Anybody else?

1 FROM THE FLOOR: Do you have a
2 direct line on which way the trains
3 are going to go?

4 MR. LEVY: Excuse me?

5 FROM THE FLOOR: Do you have a
6 direct line on which way the trains
7 are going to go? I mean, like
8 Amtrak or something like the MBTA,
9 what's the route, like, from where
10 they go to from where to where,
11 from North Station?

12 MR. LEVY: No. This will be
13 from South Station through
14 Providence along the main line to
15 New London to New Haven and on to
16 Washington.

17 FROM THE FLOOR: What
18 residential area does it cover?

19 MR. LEVY: It's the Southwest
20 Corridor here locally.

21 FROM THE FLOOR: It's just the
22 what; what towns?

23 MR. LEVY: The adjacent

1 Southwest Corridor where the
2 commuter rail line and the orange
3 line operate on.

4 FROM THE FLOOR: Does that
5 Amtrak go right by Providence
6 Street in Hyde Park?

7 MR. LEVY: I'm not too sure.

8
9 (From the floor)

10
11 MR. LEVY: When you leave we
12 have some staff here, they'll be
13 able to show you areas of where it
14 is. And if you'd like to do it now
15 and what it's going to propose look
16 like, there's some maps on the back
17 and pictures. Our staff will show
18 you where.

19 Is there anybody else that
20 would like to comment? Okay. What
21 we'll do is we'll adjourn for a
22 little bit and then we'll reconvene
23 in case anybody comes in later.

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(Hearing adjourned)

(Hearing reconvened)

MR. LEVY: This is a public hearing for evaluation for electrification from New Haven to Boston.

We gave a presentation earlier and this is open to the public or any concerned parties to give comment or ask any questions.

Is there anybody else that would like to comment? Please identify yourself and feel free.

MR. DIMECO: My name is Bob DiMeco. I'm representing the Boston Transportation Department for the City of Boston.

I'd like to submit the following letter as our comments to this document. Thank you very

1 much.

2 MR. LEVY: Thank you. Is
3 there anybody else that would like
4 to comment? We will stay open for
5 another fifteen minutes in which
6 time we will recess until seven
7 o'clock this evening.

8 Are there any other further
9 comments? If not we'll continue
10 this meeting until 7:00 this
11 evening.

12
13 (Hearing adjourned)

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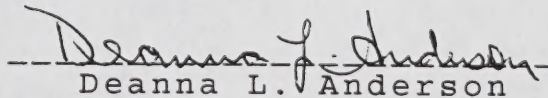
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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Norfolk, ss.

I, DEANNA L. ANDERSON, Certified Shorthand Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing testimony is true and accurate, to the best of my knowledge and ability.

WITNESS MY HAND, this 3rd day of December, 1993.


Deanna L. Anderson

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